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JFK's slaying: They put 'con' in 'conspiracy'

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SOME PEOPLE BELIEVE that the government conspiratorially suppresses abductions of Americans by space aliens. Others believe that the LAPD framed O.J. And there are those who see conspiracy behind the assassination of John F. Kennedy, though they cannot even agree among themselves on who the conspirators were.

But any rational reader of Gerald Posner's 1993 book, "Case Closed," will conclude that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone. He is condemned by the following summary of undisputed facts (adapted from the review Valerie Klein and I did for the American Journal of Legal History):



The night before the assassination on Nov. 22, 1963, in Dallas, Oswald made an unusual weekday trip to his wife's home, where his rifle was kept. The next morning, after leaving his wedding ring and \$170 on her dresser, he

took a long paper bag to the Texas School Book Depository, telling a co-worker that it contained curtain rods. None was found.

But the empty bag found on the sixth floor bore his prints and fibers from the blanket in which he kept his rifle. The rifle was also there, bearing Oswald's palmprint and fibers from his shirt. Nearby lay his clipboard, none of his work orders having been filled.

Oswald's alibi for the shooting, eating lunch with a buddy, was contradicted by the supposed buddy, whose own story is corroborated by others who watched the presidential motorcade with him from the fifth floor. (They heard the shooter above them working the bolt and the shells hitting the floor).

Of the depository employees, only Oswald disappeared after the assassination. His erratic path took him to his roominghouse. He entered only long enough to retrieve his handgun and jacket.

Next, Dallas police officer J.D. Tippett was killed. The shells dropped from his murderer's gun match Oswald's to the exclusion of all others. Cornered in the Texas Theater, Oswald tried to shoot the arresting officer with that gun.

To dispel the overwhelming case against Oswald, conspiracy advocates must refute these facts and/or establish others. But their stock-in-trade is not facts, but questions — sinister, unanswerable and ultimately meaningless.

What was Oswald's motive? No one knows, but murderers are highly aberrant people whose motives are often unfathomable. Suppose John Hinckley Jr. had died in a shoot-out with the Secret Service: The fact that he was trying to kill President Reagan in order to impress Jodie Foster would have died with him.

Oswald exemplifies the aberrant "lone nut" assassin: bumbling, irrational, delusional, misfit; aimless wanderer; wife-beater; a miserable ne'er-do-well whose desire to be "somebody" was mocked by continual failures culminating in his dissolving marriage.

What was nightclub owner Jack Ruby's motive for killing Oswald two days later, thereby dooming himself for life imprisonment? Only fanatics could think postulating that Ruby was a Mafioso (or a CIA agent?) answers this more convincingly than Ruby's own explanation: Inspired by manic patriotism, he imagined he would be received as a national hero.

Outrage and grief engendered by prior assassinations have inspired similar deeds by similarly

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NOV. 24, 1963: Lee Harvey Oswald is slain by nightclub owner Jack Ruby in Dallas, two days after police had arrested Oswald, accusing him of killing President John F. Kennedy with a rifle. AP photo

disturbed people: Garfield's assassin was shot at in his cell by a soldier who was later acquitted on grounds of insanity. John Wilkes Booth was killed against orders by a soldier who had castrated himself out of religious mania.

Without any evidence of other shooters, there is no basis for assuming guilt of anyone but (or beside) Oswald. He was too irresponsible for the Mafia, CIA, or whoever, to trust as a spy or assassin. Even as a "patsy," this erratic shirker could not be depended upon even to show up for work — much less be seen there right before and after

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the shooting, yet accommodatingly disappear during the crucial moments!

The single-bullet theory (endorsed by all ballistics experts) eliminates the need to postulate other shooters. Despite Oliver Stone's filmmaking antics, computer simulations show that JFK and Texas Gov. John Connally were perfectly aligned for a single bullet. (Those who are interested should access Emmy-winning Dale Myers' website <http://www.rust.net/~dmyers/jfk/>)

Fanatics of the right and left happily join hands in conspiracy theories. The racist Liberty Lobby

preaches that there was no Holocaust. It says it's an invention of "the International Jews" to cover their evil-doing — including JFK's assassination, which was carried out by their minions, the CIA, Trilateral Commission and/or Israeli secret agents.

Although conspiracy fanatics Mark Lane and Oliver Stone purport to be liberals, Lane is the Liberty Lobby's legal mouthpiece; he and Stone contribute to its bizarre, racist publications. The technical adviser for Stone's 1991 film, "JFK" (and model for its Donald Sutherland character, "Colonel X"), Fletcher Prouty, sits on LL's board along with the former Grand Dragon of the Mississippi KKK.

Bigotry is a natural correlate of conspiracism. Many 19th century Americans believed that Lincoln, an economic protectionist, was assassinated by "the international Jew Bankers," led by the Rothschilds, seeking to seize control of the American economy. Other deranged bigots contended that the Catholic Church assassinated Lincoln, having secretly sponsored secession out of its alleged hostility to free institutions and thus to the United States. Then, as now, such views were buttressed by a plethora of falsehoods, e.g. that all the conspirators were Catholics.

People who believe in space aliens, O.J. Simpson's innocence or a JFK conspiracy cannot be dissuaded. But anyone interested in serious, rational answers will find them in "Case Closed."

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